

AMENDMENT TO THE DRAWINGS

Figs. 1, 6 and 7 have been amended. The attached sheets of formal drawings replace the original sheets including Figs. 1, 6 and 7.

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The applicant's attorneys appreciate the Examiner's thorough search and remarks.

Responsive to the objections set forth in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Office Action, Figs. 1, 6 and 7 have been corrected. Withdrawal of the objections is requested.

Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Perlov et al. (U.S. 6,283,692, hereinafter "Perlov") in view of Mages et al. (U.S. 6,736,582, hereinafter "Mages").

Reconsideration is requested.

Claim 1 has been amended and now calls for the following combination:

1. A substrate processing apparatus comprising:

 a substrate processing unit for performing a predetermined process on a substrate; and

 a substrate transfer unit for holding a container for storing substrates therein and transferring said substrates stored in said container to said substrate processing unit, wherein

 said substrate transfer unit includes:

 a mounting part for mounting said container on a fixed shelf to transfer said substrates stored in said container to said substrate processing unit;

 a first shelf line containing a plurality of first shelves arranged in a vertical direction at a first predetermined interval, each being capable of mounting said container thereon;

 a second shelf line provided between said mounting part and said first shelf line and containing a plurality of second shelves arranged in the vertical direction at a second predetermined interval, each being capable of mounting said container thereon;

 a displacing element for displacing one of said plurality of second shelves corresponding to one of said plurality of first shelves in the vertical direction, wherein said at least one of said plurality of first shelves in said first shelf line holds a container to be transported, and said one of said plurality of second shelves in said second shelf line corresponds to said one of said plurality of first shelves holding a

container to be transported, relative to the other in the vertical direction, thereby ensuring a container transport path of a height greater than said second predetermined interval in said second shelf line; and

a transport element for transporting said container to be transported to said shelf in mounting part in the horizontal direction along said container transport path created by said displacing element.

An apparatus according to the present invention as defined by claim 1 allows the container to be transported from the first shelves to a fixed shelf in the mounting part without moving the container mounted on one of the second shelves to the fixed shelf even when a container is mounted on a first shelf and a container is mounted on an adjacently disposed second shelf. This result is attainable due to a second shelf line and a displacing element as set forth in claim 1.

Because the second shelf line is between a mounting part and a first shelf line, when a container is mounted on both shelves, namely, one on a first shelf and one on an adjacently disposed second shelf, it would be necessary to move the container mounted on an adjacently disposed second shelf to another shelf to create a container transport path so that the container mounted on the first shelf can be transported to the mounting part.

In an apparatus according to claim 1, a second shelf that is disposed adjacent a first shelf is displaced to create a transport path. Therefore, it is not necessary to move the container mounted on the second shelf to another shelf. An apparatus according to claim 1 is particularly effective in reducing the time required for transporting containers.

Perlov et al. discloses a shelf line containing fixed shelves and does not disclose or suggest second shelves displaced (or displaceable) in the vertical direction by a displacing element.

Mages et al. discloses a device for loading and unloading a clean room, and moving a container up and down. That is, the device just moves the mounting part up and down. Therefore, the device of Mages et al. which includes only fixed storage shelves is distinguishable from a mounting part that transfers substrates stored in the container to a substrate processing unit.

Furthermore, even when the device of Mages et al. moves the container up, the container transport path as disclosed in claim 1 cannot be created below the container. Therefore, the

device disclosed in Mages et al. is different from a combination that includes second shelves and a displacing element as called for by claim 1.

To summarize, the cited references fail to disclose or suggest the claimed displacing element of claim 1 and the claimed second shelf line wherein each of the second shelves is moved vertically by the displacing element.

Therefore, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the application.

Claims 2-5 depend from claim 1, and each includes other limitations which in combination with those of claim 1 are not shown or suggested by the art of record. Reconsideration is requested.

The application is believed to be in condition for allowance. Such action is earnestly solicited.

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